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Senior Citizens and the Community

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES BRANCH

Ontario Department of Education

206 Huron Street

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Senior Citizens and the Community

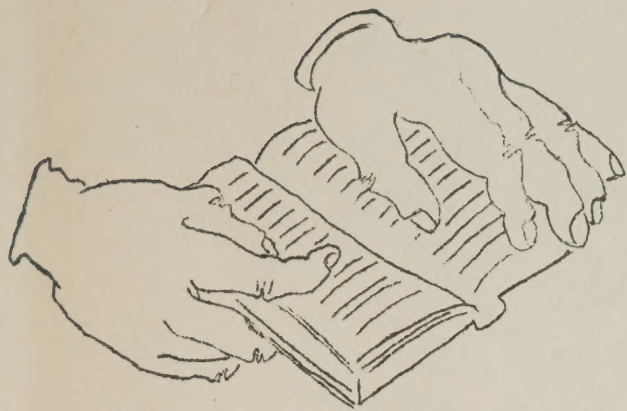
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There has been in recent years a great increase in the attention given to the problems of aging in a highly competitive society. The increased interest has resulted in the publication of a good deal of practical material on the subject. This booklet has been compiled from the most useful of these publications which have come to our attention.

Gerontology is the study of all problems of aging and geriatrics is the medical science of senescence. Psychologists are beginning to study these problems too in order to be able to tell us what mental adjustments we will need to make to face old-age successfully.

What the community can do for its senior citizens is a problem that concerns everyone. To plan good programmes for older people we need to know their needs, their problems and their possibilities. Then there is the question of who will guide the programmes and what qualifications and training these leaders should have.

A different type of programme can be planned for those who meet every day in homes for the aged than that planned for those who meet periodically at a community centre. Loneliness is common to all old people no matter what their circumstances, but many who could profit from the friendly associations connected with the programmes will be prevented from doing so if any expense is involved. If the old people come from all parts of the community and have varying incomes, care must be taken not to eliminate the indigent.

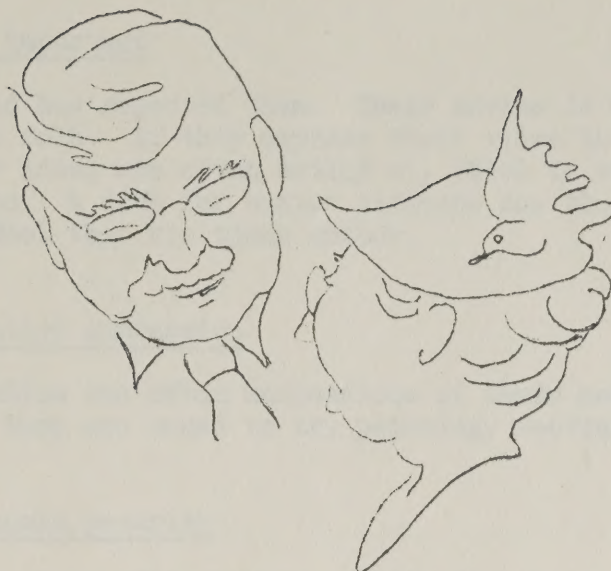
Industry is beginning to take an interest in the problems of the retired worker and many firms have programmes of preparation for retirement as well as programmes for retired employees.

We are beginning to see, however, that the provision of programmes for senior citizens is not enough. We are beginning to understand that our attitude to the aged must change and that old people themselves need to be trained toward responsibility for their own programmes.

In Mexico they say that a boy ought to be taught two hobbies, one for the years of his strength and one for the years of his weakness. It is true that if children were more completely trained for self-sufficiency and encouraged to think imaginatively no special programmes would be needed for them when they in turn became senior citizens. However, the members of the present older generation are living much longer than they themselves expected. The proportion of people over 60 in the population has been rapidly increasing. Most of these people have worked hard all their lives and never learned to make profitable use of leisure time. Many are forced to retire before they are ready for retirement and the value of their savings or pensions has not increased with the rising cost of living. Special planning for them needs to be undertaken for some years to come.

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I The N E E D S of Senior Citizens

1. The need for a change in our attitude toward old age

Senator Desmond, who chairs the New York State Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging, calls old people "prisoners of prejudice." He says "the rigid, irrational views society holds are stripping millions of the aged of a rich finale in the drama of life" and urges young and middle-aged people to find a truer view of old age.

2. The need to be wanted

For those who are alone in the world and for those who fancy they are not wanted, club life can fill a need if it gives them something more than passive entertainment and if the leaders know how to treat each member as an individual.

3. The need to be useful

Feeling wanted and feeling useful are closely allied. Club activities need to be arranged so that they give all who wish it something to do for the others. Some will be able to teach special skills or act on committees, others will be happy if asked to wash dishes.

4. The need for love and companionship

A Golden Age Club or a Second Mile Club (whatever it happens to be called) can provide the friendships many older people lack because death has claimed the friends of earlier years.

5. The need to feel important

The business world has rejected them. Their advice is not usually wanted by younger folk. If they express their views in a group of mixed ages, their ideas are often smiled at, which is even worse than outright rejection. A club for senior citizens has the advantage of making each one feel that his ideas matter.

6. The need for creative expression

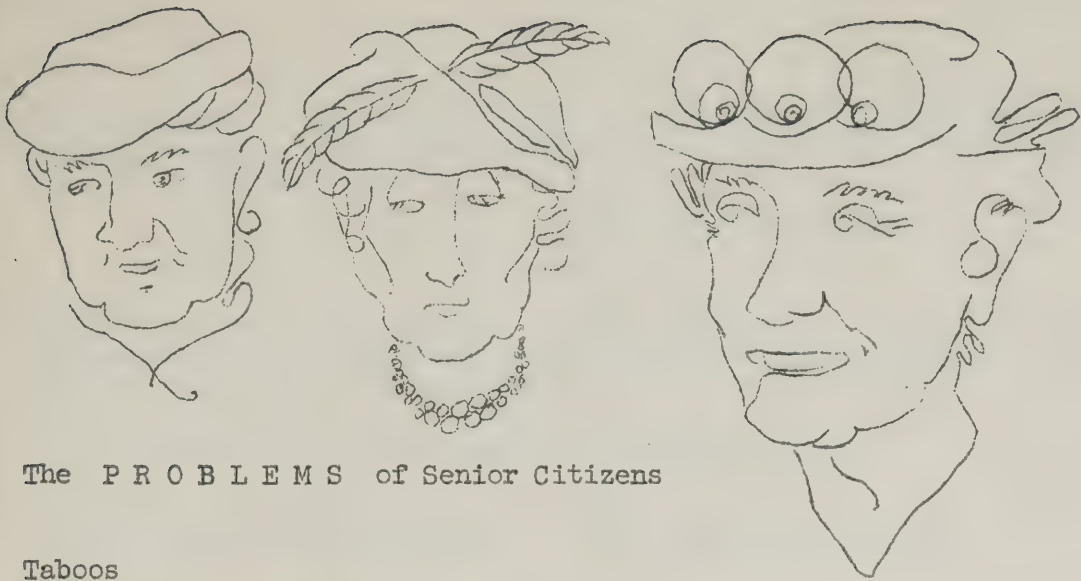
Old people themselves are often unconscious of their need for creative expression until they are urged to try painting, weaving or acting.

7. The need for economic security

It is outside the power of a club to provide for the economic needs of its members, but by holding hobby shows and giving the members opportunities to sell what they have made, the club can help them to obtain the little extras their pensions will not cover.

In AGE IS NO BARRIER, a report of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee, you will find the following Bill of Rights for senior citizens.

- The right to an opportunity to continue to be useful;
- The right to an equal opportunity to obtain employment based on merit, not birthdays;
- The right to freedom from the spectre of want in old age and burial in a pauper's grave;
- The right to a fair share of the community's recreational, educational and medical resources;
- The right to obtain decent housing suited to the needs of later years;
- The right to the respect of the community, based on service to the community;
- The right to the support of one's family to an extent consonant with the best interests of the family;
- The right to live independently as one chooses;
- The right to live with dignity as a free human being unfettered by antiquated concepts of the "proper role of old people";
- The right of access to all available knowledge on how to make the later years happy years.



II The PROBLEMS of Senior Citizens

1. Taboos

"Many of the difficulties that face our aged are due to taboos."

"Many of these taboos are based on superstitions, incorrect facts and pressures arising from a youth-worshipping society."

"Our society believes that for an aged man to marry is silly, if not obscene. An oldster's need for companionship and affection is overlooked."

"Our society looks upon an old man who dances or skates, as undignified."

"Our culture frowns on elderly people who wish to wear bright gay clothing."

"We frown on gray-haired grandmothers who want to work."

"Our society sets up approved modes of conduct for the aged. Sitting in a rocking chair is acceptable and encouraged."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER

2. Inflation

The cost of living has gone upward steadily but pensions have not.

3. A Place to Live

"Oldsters spend more time in their quarters than do other age groups."

"The worst-housed segment of our population is our aged."

"Our elderly live in houses or apartments constructed for younger people. They ramble around in homes built for a period when they were raising a family, or in crowded apartments....where steps and stairs take a toll of the heart. They live squeezed in with their married children

with no place of their own to entertain friends. You find them in seedy rooming houses, in the slums, over a store, in the back flats, in a cubby-hole in a rooming house."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER

4. Is our country taking advantage of the experience in an older worker's background? Fixed retirement age policies in industry shut off many workers from jobs which need their experience and judgment.

Are we using the mature judgment of our older people?

To be self-supporting sustains our pride in ourselves. One of the answers found in New York State is the sheltered workshop.

5. Health

"Our communities long have known that public health is purchaseable, but have been interested virtually solely in purchasing health for infants and children. Our communities can buy vitality for the middle-aged and elderly. The cost is reasonable."

"Health education directed to the middle-aged and elderly....could build a healthier and happier older population."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER

6. Rehabilitation

"Whether medical or vocational, rehabilitation is a dynamic approach to disability."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER

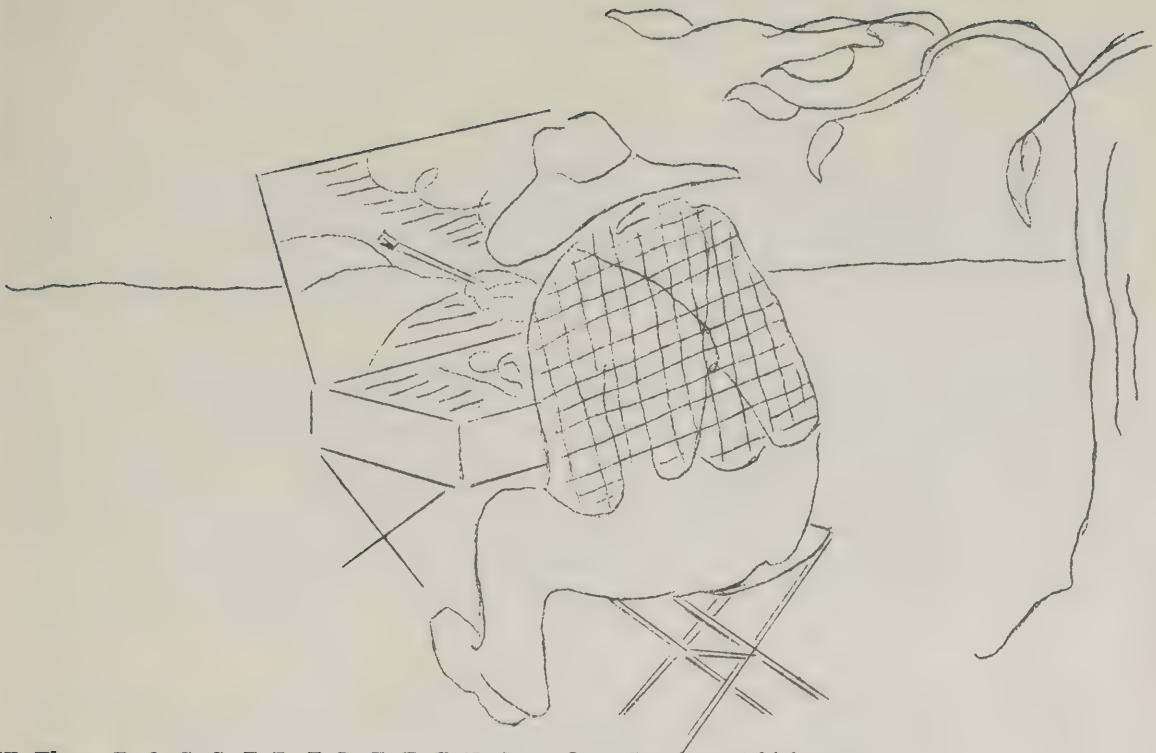
"It has been our experience that 90% of these people (who have had strokes) can be trained to complete self-care and ambulation and a third can be gotten back to gainful employment."

Dr. Howard Rusk

7. Social Security

The New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging found that "There must be a fluidity in the social security mechanism which will permit its use to influence labour supply and demand as needs dictate and enable use of its reserves to finance, on a self-liquidating basis, housing and rehabilitative operations of direct help to the aged."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER



III The POSSIBILITIES for Senior Citizens

The Chicago Plan in its introduction suggests that any comprehensive plan of community services for older people must take into account three groups of older people.

1. People whose minds and bodies are still able but who suffer from the general prejudice against the aged.
2. People with disabilities who could be rehabilitated to a point where they could manage for themselves.
3. People who will need services for the remainder of their lives in order to live at all comfortably.

It would, therefore, seem wise to plan for three types of programmes.

In order to gain support for programmes planned for senior citizens, there will first need to be a programme to educate the community as to the value of such work. It could be carried out through newspapers, radio and general meetings, with a specialized approach to special groups such as unions and professions.

For the first group mentioned above the greatest need is for suitable employment (either for pay or voluntary). Once employers are relieved of their prejudices against elderly employees, much can be done to secure gainful employment. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association recently declared themselves against a compulsory retirement age.

The Counselling Service for applicants for employment over 45 years of age, Ontario Region, National Employment Service, reports that between 1948 and 1951 it interviewed a total of 5,000 persons and 3,200 were able to find permanent employment. Over half of these "difficult to place" people were over 60 years of age.

For the second group of senior citizens, a rehabilitation programme is the greatest need and doctors are needed on the planning committee. In AGE IS NO BARRIER the New York State Legislative Committee reports on a county home where the aged "lived an existence of insidious vegetation". A rehabilitation programme was instituted with less than \$200 for equipment. Of 308 patients treated, 80% were restored to ambulation which cut down the expenditure for nursing service and for drugs, 15% were able to return home and 13% were able to work and found employment.

The people of the third group can profit from well-planned recreation programmes to counteract loneliness and defeat and to help them to live cheerfully with their disabilities. Indeed recreation is of great value in all three groups.

To go at this work blindly might do more harm than good. To give it study and then to make a careful plan will pay in dollars and cents to the community as well as to the senior citizens themselves. It needs the cooperation of service clubs, churches and other organizations and the volunteer workers need some training to do a good job. A patronizing air, for instance, would kill it in its first steps.

Finding a place where a programme can be carried on is a big part of the problem. Able-bodied people can meet at a community hall but these buildings are often only available for once-a-week meetings, perhaps better than nothing but hardly adequate. A centre of their own where they can gather each day and possibly some evenings is much better.

In Ohio and in New York State, however, many Golden Age Clubs were started as once-a-week affairs. The experience gained by the community has laid the foundation for day centres which are open day and night seven days of the week. Similarly the Second Mile Club of Toronto has its centre at 192 Carlton Street where people over 60 come to read, play cards, eat together (their own food), to learn painting at certain times, leatherwork at other times and escape from the dreariness of their rooming houses.

In some communities day centres are Red Feather projects. In other communities the centres are kept independent of the local welfare department because it is felt they should be representative of all economic levels and educational backgrounds. As the New York State Legislative Committee says, "loneliness and despair play no favourites."



IV PROGRAMMES for Senior Citizens

Many programmes for elderly people are being carried out now in Ontario centres.

Miss Margaret Kennedy completed a thesis on RECREATION FOR THE AGED in August 1952, toward her Master's degree in Social Work, University of Toronto. She sent a questionnaire to places across Canada where it was thought some programming for senior citizens might be carried on. The replies revealed that most members of clubs in Canada would prefer the following activities in the order given:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Entertainment by their own members | 4. Games |
| 2. Music | 5. Outside entertainment |
| 3. Parties | 6. Food served |

She also asked about games and favourites were chosen in this order:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Bingo | 4. Chess |
| 2. Party Games | 5. Croquinole |
| 3. Checkers | 6. Dominoes |

Miss Kennedy also interviewed fifty men and women of Toronto's Second Mile Club and their preferences for activities worked out to the following percentages:

Excursions	92%
Lounge	92%
Music	90%
Games	88%
Entertainment by their own members	84%
Parties	82%
Entertainment from outside	80%
Projects	78%
Cards	68%
Food served	64%
Educational programmes	54%
Business meetings	44%
Dancing	40%
Crafts	34%
Other	32%

Community Centre Services for the Elderly, Fort Wayne, Indiana, hoping to improve its recreation programme sent questionnaires to 113 Recreation Directors in cities with populations exceeding 100,000. They received 98 replies and most of the Directors felt there was much room for improvement in their planning. The most popular activities were listed in this order:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Handcrafts | 7. Social Parties |
| 2. Music | 8. Clubs |
| 3. Dancing -especially square dancing | 9. Classes |
| 4. Hobbies | 10. Sports -horseshoes, croquet, shuffleboard, etc. |
| 5. Nature Study | |
| 6. Drama | 11. Quiet games |

One remarkable point about these lists is that while handcrafts tops the Fort Wayne list, it is near the bottom of the Toronto list. Most writers on gerontology urge the encouragement of creative art and crafts programmes as giving more real satisfaction than being amused. Many of these elderly people worked ten to fourteen hours a day during their productive years and had little spare time in which to develop hobbies. They may, therefore, turn down the suggestion at first but if they see a few people like themselves painting or carving they may after a while want also to try painting or carving or some other craft.

An excellent pamphlet on recreation for senior citizens is PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS FOR CLEVELAND GOLDEN AGE CLUBS by James H. Woods, the experienced Director of the Recreation Project for Older People, Welfare Division, Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Woods begins with the warning that what has succeeded in one group may fail in another and therefore it is much better to use your own imagination and the suggestions of your own club members than to follow a programme list prepared by someone else. He then lists programmes that have been found successful in some clubs. He also warns that, in his opinion, it is best in the end if card-playing is never introduced into the programme of a club for old people because if it is available some people will never be interested in doing anything else. "It only takes four people to play a game of cards and they could easily meet in one home for that purpose." He suggests that if cards are requested a vote should be taken on it after discussion.

Georgene E. Bowen, Director of Recreation for Philadelphia's older people suggests with delightful pictures and legends in A PLACE IN THE SUN, sixty-one different activities carried on in sixty-eight different clubs or classes in Philadelphia and neighbouring counties.



V SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

In New York City sheltered workshops have been conducted since 1915 and have proved a means of giving employment to the handicapped, both those with physical disabilities and those handicapped by the age limits in industry. The workers are asked to punch a time clock, not to be sure that they put in the required time, but to be sure they do not work too long!

In England 60 sheltered workshops were instituted and operated by the Labour Government and private agency workshops were subsidized also. Presumably these are being continued.

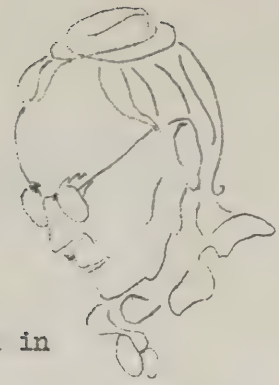
There is a sheltered workshop in Toronto operated by the Women's Patriotic League at 90 Isabella Street. The League was organized in 1914 for war work and still continues the workshop as a means of giving employment to 37 women over 60 years of age and to 3 who are younger but physically handicapped.

The women work on sewing jobs which are brought in to them and each confines herself to the type of work she can do best. One woman, for instance, does nothing but turn shirt collars and cuffs or make new collars from the tails of the shirts. A second woman re-covers eider-down quilts, a third does beautiful quilting, a fourth makes braided mats that do not curl up. Others alter clothing and those who cannot sew well make up two-poun balls of rag strips for carpets.

Individuals bring the work, call for it and pay the League. Each worker is paid according to the work she does. They are also given a good meal at noon and they help with the dishwashing and tidying up. Economically it might not be considered a sound business, but when you see the light in their faces because they have both employment and congenial companionship, you know it is sound for it is keeping 40 people well and therefore costing the city only a small part of what it would cost if they were in institutions or hospitals.

Mrs. Kirkness, the director of the workshop, wrote in an article: "We cannot anticipate that a workshop will be self-sustaining when measured by the report of a Certified Public Accountant. It shows a decided profit when we balance the financial results against the social gains and consider the mental and physical well-being of the person and those with whom she lives."

Such workshops are a good possibility in cities where service clubs or community chests could be sold on the idea of preventing the high cost of complete care by providing means for senior citizens to work for part of their keep.



VI C L U B S for Senior Citizens

Clubs for people over 60 years of age have been formed in many American and a few Canadian cities. The Welfare Federation of Cleveland has had much experience and has produced some of the best pamphlets on these clubs. They call them Golden Age Clubs.

Four talks and discussions on club work at a Training Institute for Golden Age Club Leaders have been condensed into one pamphlet **GROUP WORK WITH THE GOLDEN AGE**. Here are a few quotations from that pamphlet:

"A Golden Age Club can perform several services for its members:

- it gives them a place to meet old friends and to make new ones,
- the club programmes give them a chance to continue their education and to enlarge their experience as long as they live,
- it helps them to meet their responsibilities as citizens,
- it provides them with an opportunity to share their experiences with others and to learn from others in turn,
- it gives them a chance to have a good time."

"Each club has its own personality which reflects the kind of people who make up the group."

"We can expect the young to furnish their own stimulation and activity, but not the aged."

"Many clubs have programme committees chosen from the members. All clubs cannot do this."

"Resistance is high in old age and many old people will offer a great variety of excuses for not joining a club. Once you have persuaded them to make a first visit the resistance is easier to break down."

"The leader must remember that club members are adults and they should be treated with respect."

"The successful leader for a Golden Age Group is not necessarily the one who says 'I like old people'....However, an interest in old people and willingness to understand their problems is essential."

"Old people are people. They need what other ages need....They need to be recognized, not pushed aside or put on a shelf."

"Reticence, which grows out of a feeling of not being wanted, often covers up an interesting personality. To be discovered brings the old person joy and a new confidence in himself."

"Refreshments play an important part in a club programme."

"Group work is part of the whole recreation movement....It helps to compensate for the lack of our industrial system. However, group life is more than just a compensation....it has a positive value. It is an educational process."

"Old people are often sensitive and jealous. A leader cannot have favourites. The most unattractive may need help most."

"Take the clubs on the level at which you find them and go on from there. Occasionally expose them to a new experience."

As leader--"participate in the whole programme. Enthusiasm is contagious."

"Members move at slower pace than those who are younger. Don't hurry them and don't do things that require quick reactions, acute hearing or good eyesight." (However, Philadelphia Recreation Association's pamphlet A PLACE IN THE SUN shows a group of men of Italian descent in a house of industry playing their favourite game--musical chairs!)

"Good programmes come from people who believe in what they are doing. Neither the building nor technique are the most important factor. What matters most is the heart you bring....leaders can take a variety of programmes and come out at the same place."

"Programmes in clubs will be influenced by the cultural background of members, by the facilities of the meeting place, by the needs and interests of the members and by the leader's own talent."

Georgene Bowen of Philadelphia says that drawing the older person out may be the hardest job of all, but when you succeed you'll make interesting discoveries. Perhaps your oldsters can sing, play the piano, dance, write poetry, cook, do tricks, act or tell stories. Others will be able to make speeches, paint signs, keep accounts, make calls, arrange flowers, write letters, keep attendance records, set up chairs and tables or tidy up the room after meetings.

Miss Bowen also lists hazards for leaders, three of which are:

- Don't let yourself get pinned down by one person and thus lose contact with the others.
- Speak loudly and slowly so that all will be able to hear you. Let the hard of hearing sit closest to the speakers.
- Dictatorship should be avoided at all costs. This seems to be the greatest hazard of all. Lonely old people who come from comparative seclusion and inactivity into an unfamiliar group tend to be too amenable to domination. Try to prevent outspoken or aggressive members from dictating group thinking and action. This policy also applies to the leaders and volunteers.



VII The LEADER in a Club for Senior Citizens

In AGE IS NO BARRIER Clyde Murray, Executive Director of the Manhattanville Neighbourhood Centre says that trained group workers are necessary if the group experience is to be worth while for the club members. He goes on to say that a thorough understanding of the needs, problems, limitations and skills of elderly people is essential. Volunteer workers should be used to supplement the work of the professional staff.

James H. Woods, director of the Recreation Project for Older People, Cleveland Welfare Federation suggests a few types to avoid in choosing a leader for senior citizens' clubs:

The mother-hen type who is forever reminding the old people that they are fragile and incapable of doing much;

The autocrat who wants to rule. Probably he has had an unfortunate parental experience in his own background.

The "bleeding heart" who exclaims about the "poor, poor old people" and tells her friends about the "good she is doing these unhappy people".

The "hit-and-run" leader who is either so careless or so busy that he puts very little time and effort into his planning and consequently the club suffers.

Mr. Woods ends up with a description of a good leader of a Golden Age Club as one who will have as his goal full democratic participation in the planning and administration of the club's affairs by the membership. Very often it takes a considerable period of education to bring them to this point. Such a leader has an understanding of the emotional and physical components of the aging process. The programme, the pace and the mood of the club meetings are adjusted to these needs and limitations. Above all he sees them as interesting human beings with the right of self-determination, still capable of growth and development no matter what their age.

Under Things to Remember Mr. Woods lists the following:

1. Be willing to let the club express the wishes of the old folks. But remember that as a leader you must occasionally serve as a guide. Take them on the level at which you find them and go on from there. Occasionally expose them to new experience.
2. The older men and women who are the club members are usually in need of affection. Let them know that you like them yet at the same time maintain a reserve. Don't let them get too dependent upon you. You may not always be the club leader.
3. Participate in the whole programme. Enthusiasm is contagious.
4. Don't wait on the members too much. Members should help prepare refreshments and help with the cleaning up.
5. Don't be too disturbed when members complain or are a little cantankerous.
6. Be careful about playing favourites. There is rivalry for the attention of the leader. You will have more success if you are impartial.
7. Don't force members to participate. Some of them may not be physically well.
8. Help new members to feel important. Introduce them by name to the other members of the group. It may take them some time to feel relaxed and "at home". Many of them have never belonged to a club before. Some have not played for a long time.
9. Members move at a slower pace than those who are younger. Don't hurry them too much and don't do things that require quick reactions, acute hearing or good eyesight.
10. Avoid controversial issues if possible. They are disturbing to the old people. But if there is a real issue, deal with it frankly and unemotionally.
11. Be careful that your own emotional needs do not over-influence you as a leader. The leader who gives in to an urge to dominate the group or to have the members dependent upon him is not a successful leader.



VIII Recreation in HOMES FOR THE AGED

The U. S. Federal Security Agency's account of the first National Conference on Aging, held in 1950, is called MAN AND HIS YEARS. In the section on creative and recreational activities, the report has this to say: "Too few homes for the aged have as yet recognized the value of creative and recreational programmes in maintaining the health and happiness of their residents. The more alert have installed arts and crafts projects, music appreciation and reading clubs, choral groups, reception committees. A few have extended their facilities to older persons who live in the neighbourhood, thus providing a nucleus for a community old-age recreation programme. Occupational therapy programmes have been installed in some institutions where the bulk of the residents are disabled or chronically ill."

In Philadelphia club groups have been formed in three homes for the aged. Invitations have been sent to members of institutions to attend club meetings in their vicinity and in one case the entire waiting list of an institution was sent invitations to clubs in their neighbourhoods.

"Clubs have been started in institutions. In the north of England there is a club for the "over-sixties" of which the chairman and organizer is himself 87. Since he started the club he has become a changed man with a fresh will to live."

from AGE IS OPPORTUNITY

"Actual physical care often takes so much of the time and energy of an institution staff that little is left to develop recreational activity. Yet part of the need (of old people) is to be related to the world outside the institution."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER

The need to be wanted and to be useful, the need for love and companionship, the need for creative expression as well as for economic security are felt just as strongly by elderly people as by the young.

How can these needs be met for those in homes for the aged?

If an occupational therapist can be found who can visit the home even once a week she could start them upon a well-planned programme of creative activities that could be arranged to bring them some additional remuneration through a sale of hand-make goods. If residents in institutions feel they cannot do useful work any longer, they just sit and wait--and grumble.

Recreation may be the first step toward rehabilitation. The activity of even shuffleboard or croquet gets the blood flowing a little more freely. When they find they can square dance and play musical chairs they will likely be ready to try making things especially if they have been shown that they can help others by what they do.

In an institution in England the men mend broken toys which an organization something like the Junior League gathers and brings to them. Then the children from the wrong side of the tracks are brought together and the elderly men themselves present the children with the mended toys. The women dress dolls from remnants brought to them.

Dr. Schtt, Director of the Counselling Service in the Canadian Unemployment Commission is a strong believer in "work you like" as a preventive of the ills of old age. He tells about an institution in the States where a new superintendent was appointed. One evening, after a few weeks of watching to see what the customs were, he called the staff together and told them that the next morning every member of the institution was to be in the dining room for breakfast. Bed patients could be taken there in wheelchairs. When they got there he told them everyone was to do some work from that day on.

That introduction to greater activity and work may have seemed harsh to some, but if you can get volunteers to spend time helping the staff to find out what line of work each individual enjoys doing, you will have taken a long step toward helping the members of the institution to live their remaining years usefully and happily and you will also be relieving the staff of many troubles because people who are feeling useful and happy do not make trouble.

RECREATION for May 1950 contained an article "Ideas for Activities with the Elderly in Institutions". Here are a few ideas gleaned from that article:

"Light rubber horseshoes rather than the heavy regulation ones could be used, particularly indoors."

"Reading aloud for a short while selections from newspapers, magazines or fiction library is appreciated by those with poor sight."

"A book cart on which are books, magazines and supplies for quiet games and craft projects might be a very serviceable piece of equipment."

"An exhibition of handwork by older folks might encourage participation by more of them."

"Displays from downtown stores can be brought to show the older folk."

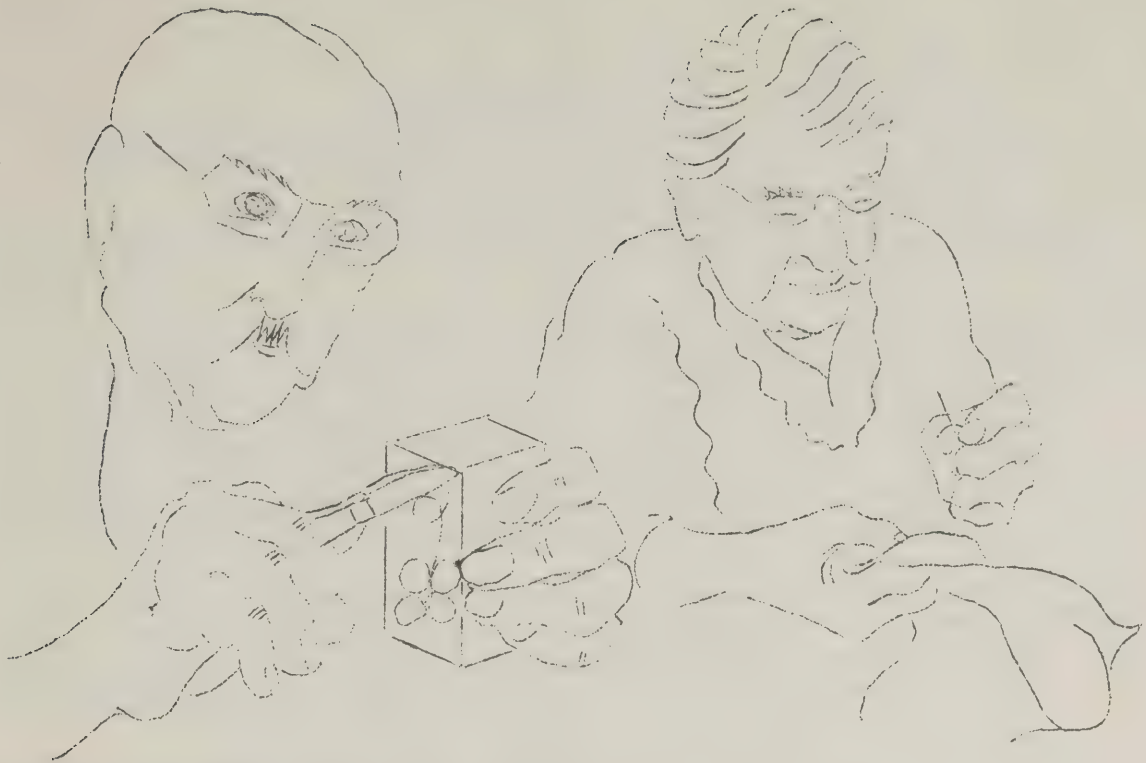
"Another aid is a "tinker shop" where those who like to work with their hands can putter."

"Surprises are appreciated. A few really big days can be celebrated, Thanksgiving, St. Patrick's etc. No wholesale pattern, such as the same gift wrappings for everyone, is appreciated."

"It might be possible to secure contributions of yarn, cloth, thread and other craft material. Finished articles could be sold at a bazaar."

The following principles are important in any type of programme for this age group:

1. Keep older adults from becoming isolated from the community.
2. Provide them with useful and interesting things to do.
3. Provide them with social opportunities.
4. Provide them with breaks in routine and with activities that have traditions and are within their own childhood experiences.
5. Provide an atmosphere conducive to friendliness and emotional well-being.
6. Imagination, enthusiasm and patience are the chief ingredients which make a programme successful.



IX Senior Citizens in R U R A L A R E A S

People who are interested in the problems of the aged seem often to concentrate on these problems in the crowded cities. Yet there are old people in rural areas too. Have they no problems?

In AGE IS NO BARRIER Dr. Roland L. Warren of Alfred University, Alfred N. Y., reports on a study made in the township of Almond in western New York State. Almond is a rural township of 1234 people, 533 of whom live in Almond Village. Nearby, but in another township, is the University Village of Alfred and also the city of Hornell which is a railroad centre of 15,000 people. The farm population is 669. Dairying is the chief farm industry in the township.

University sociology students questioned 143 people over 65. Of the 143, 90 live in the village. As a result of this study Dr. Warren lists as some of the problems of the rural aged, the following:

- a feeling of uselessness
- loneliness (need for transportation)
- lack of leisure-time activities
- weakened community ties
- financial difficulties (often caused by failing health)
- lack of medical help (through lack of funds or lack of the means of transportation to health facilities)

This study also outlines the main rural-urban differences and points out how rural areas fall behind in the following fields:

- fewer organized recreational facilities
- fewer commercial facilities (e.g. a man went without a hearing aid for weeks before he could reach the proper establishment to have it repaired)

- fewer public and private agencies
- less transportation

However, there are some advantages for the rural aged. They know almost everyone they see and relatives usually play a greater part in helping them.

What can be done to make life more meaningful for the senior citizens in rural areas? Of course not all feel useless and lonely for some continue to farm and to get about in their own cars. Providing transportation would be perhaps the greatest help. Community groups can organize to provide transportation for those who need it. Informal visiting could be organized on a group basis so that the elderly who live alone might have some companionship and help with errands.

Special events for older people can be sponsored by farmers' organizations or local Women's Institutes. In Wayne County, Pa., a banquet is held at the fall fair for those over 65 with special prizes for the oldest person present, the oldest couple, the longest married, etc.

Louise Colley, Recreation Director of Simcoe County, in an article written in September 1949, says the sense of "belonging" needs to be reinforced through participation in community activities of both a social and a service nature. Simcoe County Recreation Committee has tried to introduce social recreation which can be enjoyed by all age groups - folk dancing, party games, quiet games with an element of strategy, group singing and informal dramatics. In such situations, Miss Colley points out, appreciation of those of different age groups develops.

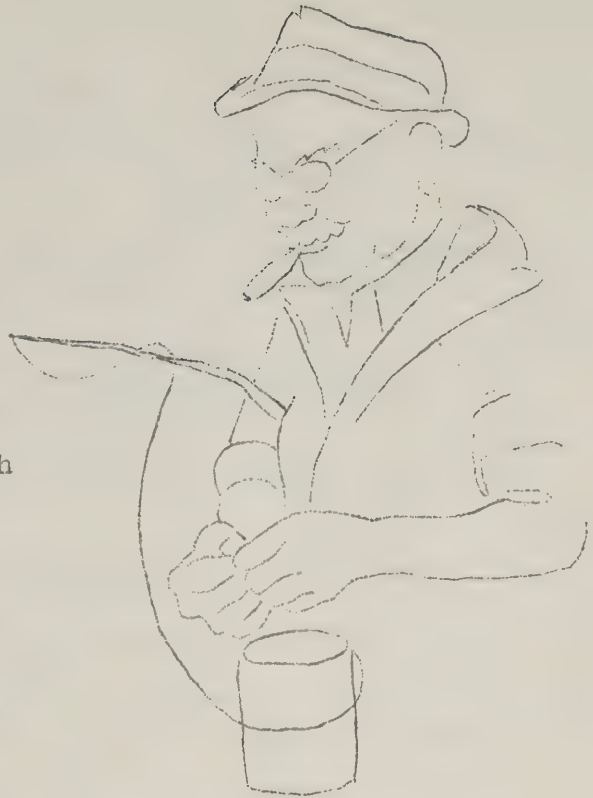
When the community cooperated in the building of a community hall, a man of 79 did the painting and finishing of window frames, stage, etc. He had great satisfaction in having helped with something the young people of the community would enjoy for many years to come.

While senior citizens' clubs can be formed in some closely knit rural areas, in others they would not be practical. Existing rural organizations can be encouraged, however, to have special nights for senior citizens and those over 60 can also be encouraged to attend rural night schools where they may learn some craft for which they had no time in earlier years and which may give them hours of creative enjoyment.

X C A M P I N G for Older Persons

"Still strongly entrenched in our society is a feeling that camping is only for youngsters. Our committee is impressed with data which indicated that camping properly planned and supervised can be a richly rewarding, reinvigorating, educational experience for our elderly, helpful to their physical and mental health."

from AGE IS NO BARRIER



CAMPING FOR THE GOLDEN AGE is the title of a pamphlet put out in 1952 by the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio, after four seasons of operating a Golden Age camp. Here is what they tell us about it.

"The camp runs for two six-day camping periods between August 24th and September 6th. Campers attend without cost to themselves. The site and food are provided by the city. The Welfare Federation provides a small budget, assumes responsibility for administration of the camp and the recruitment of the campers. The City Recreation Department has provided a craft teacher for the past four seasons.

"The old folks benefit in health and happiness....The success of the venture....is a combination of factors that have worked harmoniously together. A sympathetic staff, good food, an interesting programme, the level terrain of the camp grounds, its convenience to the city and the fact that the campers arrive at camp with other members of the Golden Age Clubs, all have a bearing on the success of the camp."

In the two weeks of the camp the age range was: 46 persons between 60 and 69, 69 persons between 70 and 79 and 13 persons over 80.

The staff consists of the director, lent by the Welfare Federation, a nurse, dietitian, cook and assistant cook, a volunteer assistant dramatics counselor, a student general counselor and three who come during the day as dramatics counselor, crafts instructor and sewing instructor.

"Campers are told they are perfectly free to relax in a comfortable chair all day long if they wish....There are usually only five or six persons in each weekly camping session who sit and do nothing.

"Participation in the classes was as follows:

First week - sewing - 22 persons	Second week - sewing - 19 persons
crafts - 33 "	crafts - 31 "
dramatics - 22 "	dramatics - 25 "

In addition there are square dances, group singing, discussion groups, and writing for the camp paper to involve the camper in some activity.

"It should be borne in mind that these elderly people grew up in a generation that was not camp-minded....The camp activities make a terrific impact upon them once they have tried them."

Here are a few comments that were overheard as the campers casually talked to each other.

A lady: "It'll give us something to think about all winter."

Another responded: "You open a drawer and you find something you made in camp....and it all comes back to you."

An elderly man: "I spent only six days here but it added five years to my life."

Another lady: "For years I haven't slept more than two or three hours at a time. Last night I slept all night."

The morning after the square dance one of the men commented that Mrs. So-and-so was an excellent dancer and had danced all the numbers. One of the women replied rather haughtily, "But she's only sixty-eight!"

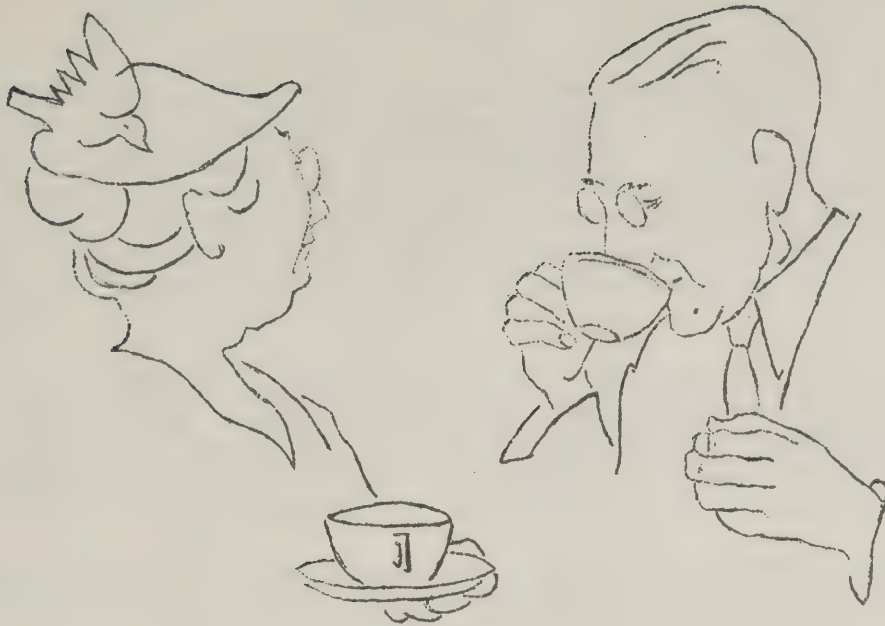
The director of the American Camping Association summarized the experience of the first three Chicago camps for older people as follows:

"Camping experience has much to offer to the enrichment of the life of older people.

"There seem to be fewer problems in considering camping for older people than had been anticipated."

"A further advantage of such camp periods lies in the fact that the camps can be used for a longer period; furthermore, these programmes should be an asset in the public relations of any camp."

from Community Services for Older People
The Chicago Plan.



XI REHABILITATION

In MAN AND HIS YEARS, an account of the First National Conference on Aging sponsored by the Federal Security Agency of the U.S.A., the section on creative and recreational activities reported that they had agreed that the individual carries into late life abundant capacity for adaptation to new sets of circumstances as well as a capacity for learning and growing.

With this fact in mind much can be done to help senior citizens handicapped by such physical disabilities as arthritis, fractures or partial paralysis, to become at least semi-independent. Those who are chronically ill with pulmonary or cardiac diseases can be at least partially rehabilitated with the guidance of a good doctor trained in rehabilitation methods. Even the person who has no specific disease, but who by his own inclination or by the suggestions of his mistaken relatives is living a life of "insidious vegetation" needs a rehabilitation programme.

Such programmes for the first two groups need an especially trained doctor and possibly involve the setting up of sheltered workshops such as have been in existence in New York City since 1915. These workshops sell competitively and pay at union rates but sacrifice economy of production for the safety of the workers who work at their own speed. The workshops therefore have to have financial support either from philanthropical agencies or from government.

For the third group social workers, therapists and recreational directors trained in rehabilitation programmes are, in a few large cities, accomplishing excellent results. Senior citizens who expected to spend the rest of their lives in homes for the aged or in rest homes are gradually being returned to their relatives who are glad to have them when they find they are once more independent or nearly so.

Such rehabilitation programmes require much patience on the part of the worker. At first many of the handicapped are apathetic toward the idea of making anything or doing anything. In one home a social worker took some needlework with her while she visited a bedridden patient with a hopeless outlook. The worker fussed over her fancy work and talked about it until the patient finally begged to try it herself! Finding that she could do it gave her courage to try other things.

Mr. Ludlow, director of the Homes for the Aged Division of the Ontario Department of Welfare tells of a superintendent he found playing croquet with an inmate with crippled hands. Manipulating the stick was getting the blood to circulate through the twisted fingers though nothing was being said about it.

The OHIO CITIZEN for March-April 1952, is given entirely to the recreational activities of Ohio's older people. The first half is a condensation of the report CLUBS FOR THE GOLDEN AGE and the second section is a summary of a study of leisure-time activities in Ohio homes for old people.

In the second section convincing evidence is reported to show that a "leader who combines personality with the right training can get response and participation from a surprising proportion of residents in homes for the aged." The article went on to point out that where persons with crafts, recreation and group work training could not be employed full time, "community recreational organizations might well provide part-time service continuously or on a demonstration basis."

Here is a quotation on this theme from an outstanding American psychiatrist Dr. William Menninger: "Recreation is an extremely important aid to growing older gracefully....There is no more pathetic sight than the older person who has no interest in life and who only sits and waits--vivid evidence of the value of recreation to mental health."

XII EMPLOYMENT for those over Sixty

Dr. W. G. Scott, Employment Adviser, Ontario Region, National Employment Service, began a speech to the Second International Gerontological Congress, held in St. Louis in 1951, with this verse:

In heathen times when skulls were thick,
Did primal passions rage.
They had a method sure and quick
To cure the blight of age.

If one's native youth had fled..
And time had sapped his vim,
They simply popped him on the head;
That was the last of him.

But in this, our enlightened age,
We're made of finer stuff,
And so we look with righteous rage
On methods crude and tough.

So when our man grows old and grey
And bent and short of breath,
We simply take his job away
And let him starve to death.

In December 1947 the National Employment Service began an interesting experiment in counselling of mature applicants for work. First those engaged in the experiment had to study the philosophy and techniques necessary for interviewing older persons who were often "a frustrated, confused, defeated segment of society."

Dr. Scott says they decided to be very courteous and attentive to each one's life history and that this attitude on the part of the counsellors paid off in changing the individual's attitude from confused defeat to a happy purposefulness.

The counselling took the form of discovering the thing the person most wanted to do and of suggesting how to go about looking for that particular work instead of "looking for a job." The applicants went away with new hope and a new insight into their own work possibilities and with a definite job plan of their own making. By 1951, 5,000 of the "difficult to place" applicants had been counselled and 3,200 secured permanent employment. One half of the latter number were over 60. Similar counselling services have now been set up in Ottawa, Hamilton, London and Windsor in addition to the original one in Toronto.

This counselling service experiment was unique and now that it is beyond the experimental stage, it is being followed in many American states as well as in other provinces of Canada.

Another side to this picture is the need for education of the public, particularly employers, to get rid of what the New York State Joint

Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging called in their report "the community-bred, negative attitudes towards the older job-seeker."

In Schenectady, New York, the Mohawk Development Company is composed entirely of men retired against their will by other Schenectady firms. They formed their own company and today are not only "doing work for the giant companies that had once discarded them, but also top-secret army products."

"A Wisconsin machinery manufacturer recently opened a manufacturing unit in Fort Pierce, Florida, because of the availability of retired engineers and machinists!"

from AGING - May 1953

The New York State Council of Retail Merchants recently made a survey of the employment of older personnel, covering 200 stores in both big cities and small towns. According to the New York Times "typical comments were that older employees in retailing excel in reliability, steadiness, lower turnover, morale, customer confidence and eagerness to please and do well."

On employment THE CHICAGO PLAN says the establishment of a senior employment division as soon as possible would appear to be the most constructive action that could be taken to eliminate dependency in old age. The book outlines the function of such a division as follows:

1. To conduct research in job analysis and classification of jobs that older workers can fill.
2. To promote work opportunities.
3. To provide skilled counselling about work opportunities and about re-training programmes and to make a realistic appraisal of applicants' abilities.
4. To provide placement.
5. To explore the possibilities of second occupations for those approaching or at retirement age, in cooperation with management, unions and the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance programme.
6. To stimulate re-training programmes in line with realistic forecasts of work opportunities in various fields.
7. To cooperate with public and private agencies in planning vocational rehabilitation of older clients.
8. To work with local communities in the development of part-time jobs for older residents.



XIII RETIREMENT

Robert J. Havighurst, Professor of Education, University of Chicago, opened one of the Chicago Round Table broadcasts with these words:

"Retirement is the greatest man-made problem in the lives of most of us. Even if we are too young to think about retirement we meet the problem of retirement in the lives of our parents. It is a problem for us because work is so important in our lives. Even though we may have a good pension and enough to live on comfortably, retirement is still our problem because work is so much more than a way of earning a living."

In summing up the discussion at the close of the broadcast, Mr. Havighurst said we had learned that flexible retirement plans are possible and that they are in practice in business and industry in various parts of the United States and that a person should work as long as he wants to do so and as long as he is reasonably productive.

A large corporation in New York has drawn up plans to enable its employees to work as long as they want to and are able to do so. "The decision regarding his ability after he has reached 65 is made yearly by a retirement board composed of the company doctor, the personnel manager and the man's department head."

from GETTING READY TO RETIRE
A Public Affairs Pamphlet

Bulletin No. 7 on Employee Recreation issued by the Community Programmes Branch of the Ontario Department of Education was on the subject of preparation for retirement and suggested that any programme that prepares employees for retirement would likely have four phases:

1. An all-round schedule of leisure-time activities for all employees.
2. A pension plan or some other means of financial assistance.
3. Provision for pre-retirement counselling.
4. Some method of maintaining post-retirement contacts.

The T. Easton Company have a very fine retirement programme which was outlined to a discussion group on senior citizens at the 8th Annual Provincial Recreation Conference by Mr. Zurbrigg.

By the way, while that group's topic for discussion was programming for senior clubs, the group saw clearly that the crux of the senior citizen's problem is in compulsory retirement and they asked that the O.R.A. Executive name a committee to study the question.

A pamphlet put out by Esso New Jersey Works called PREPARATION FOR RETIREMENT describes the problem, reasons for it and Esso's approach to it through a series of five discussion group meetings to be followed up by personal evaluating interviews six months after retirement.

We have noted in our section on employment (XIII) that the CHICAGO PLAN recommends the setting up of senior employment divisions which would analyze job opportunities and counsel retired people about obtaining work suitable to their capabilities.



XIV H O U S I N G

The progress report of the Division on Housing of the Los Angeles County Committee on Opportunities and Needs of the Aging in its conclusion says that housing for senior citizens is a serious problem and that there is a need for community planning to solve it, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also for political, economic and social reasons.

This same report quotes Canada's National Housing Act by which the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation as an agent of the Government of Canada in the housing field, is authorized to make loans to limited dividend companies for the construction of low-rental housing for old age pensioners and other persons living on small incomes.

England has perhaps made more headway in housing for senior citizens than has any country on this continent. In AGE IS OPPORTUNITY the chapter on housing deplores the "wide discrepancy between the pace of building and increasing numbers of the aged." Yet England built 9,151 one-bedroom dwellings between 1945 and the end of 1948, as well as many larger homes for the aged.

AGE IS OPPORTUNITY also suggests that: "It is essential that old people should not be segregated from the rest of the community, but that dwellings should be included as part of the general housing. This will prevent the feeling of loneliness and isolation from which the aged tend to suffer. It is a mistake to plan old people's dwellings all together round a square or in a separate cul-de-sac as the comings and goings of their younger neighbours are a source of great interest to old people."

Dr. Rudd and Dr. Andrews, two noted geriatricians from England, speaking in Hamilton in May, said "They don't want to be forever looking out on the funerals of their friends, they need to see perambulators."

These two doctors later said in Toronto that they were strongly in favour of many small "hostels" holding not more than forty people

rather than the large homes for the aged with capacity for two or three hundred. They said the small hostel would be more economical in the end because herding two to three hundred together in large homes causes apathy which leads to senility or physical illness and expensive hospitalization.

Small hostels can be built in-town as well as in the suburbs and those who prefer country life can have it while those who like to be near the stores and the "cinemas" may also have their desire.

Still better, they feel, is the leaving of the elderly with their own people and possessions around them if at all possible. If not, the next best is their own one-storey, one-bedroom dwelling. A laundry service and "meals on wheels" make it possible now in England for many more elderly people to remain in their own homes.

As for the design of the housing, some of the important features listed in AGE IS OPPORTUNITY are:

- adequate heating
- good hot water supply
- all shelves and cupboards should be within easy reach
- handrails by the bath to help with getting in and out; a bell near the bath and by the bed communicating with the next door house is a safeguard in case of sudden illness
- there should be no dark corners anywhere because of the risk of accidents
- windows should be low enough for the old people to see out when sitting down and the sill wide enough for plants
- the front door should not open directly into the living room because of draughts.

